LIBERTY
OF
CONSCIENCE,
THE
Magistrates Interest:
OR,
To grant *Liberty of Conscience* to Persons of different perswasions in matters of Religion, is the great Interest of all Kingdoms and States, and particularly of ENGLAND; *Asserted* and *Proved.*

By a Protestant, a lover of Peace, and the Prosperity of the Nation.

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Having considered (in a former Discourse) those things which do most immediately reflect upon the Magistrates Duty, in allowing a due Liberty to each mans Conscience, I shall in this, Consider how far his Interest engages him this way.

THat 'tis the greatest Interest of all Protestant States, and particularly of *England*, To give Liberty to men of differing Apprehensions in the *Protestant Religion*, is evident; if we consider, That a *Prince* or *State* by imposing the Principles of any one party in Religion, makes himself of that party, and engages all the rest against him. 'Tis no way prudent for a *Prince*, when his Subjects consist of many differing Judgments, to resolve to have them all of one mind, (a thing impracticable) or else to be their declared Enemy and Persecutor; 'tis a ready way to interrupt his own quiet and repose, without any other effect; for he will never by force and violence unite men in one Opinion, those differences will rather be fomented, and all animosities arising thereupon, and men rather fixed and confirmed by such Persecution, than any way removed from their Principles by it. 'Tis not the having several parties in Religion under a State, that is in it self dangerous, but 'tis the persecuting of them that makes them so. First, It puts them all under discontent, and then unites them together in such discontent; *Thuanus*, a wise States-man, saith, *Heretici, qui pace datâ factionibus franguntur, persecutione uniuntur contra rem publicam.* Those who in their Principles largely differ from each other, when they come to be all bound up together in one common volumn, and linked in the same chain of Persecution and Suffering, will be sure to twist themselves into an united Opposition, to such an undistinguishing severity: Whereas the thing in it self rightly considered, So many divided Interests and Parties in Religion, are much less dangerous than any, and may be prudently managed to ballance each other, and to become generally

more ſafe, and uſeful to a State, than any united party or intereſt whatever. He that is ſuffered to enjoy under a State the freedom of his Religion, when differing from the publick Profeſſion, has not only the common tye of a Subject upon him, for his protection as a man, but the cumulative obligation, and thanks to pay for his Indulgence as a Chriſtian under ſuch a Character. Subjects in ſuch a poſture, as they will ever be ſtudious of an opportunity, to teſtifie their grateful fidelity, and by ſome eminent Service to lay up a ſtock of Merit, that may ſecure their future quiet; ſo they will be of any, moſt careful, not to forfeit ſo pleaſing an Indulgence, by falling under a publick diſpleaſure. A Prince in ſuch a ſtate of things, by making himſelf a common Father to the whole Proteſtant Religion, though made up of ſome differences within it ſelf, will be ſecured not only of that common Homage of Obedience and Subjection, but with it, that more noble, of the Hearts and Affections of all his Proteſtant Subjects. To ſay any party in Religion is diſaffected to a State, and therefore not fit for ſuch favour, when ſuch diſaffection, if it be, does plainly ariſe from the Severity of the State againſt them, in that caſe; the reaſon why favour ſhould not be ſhow'd, is remov'd by ſhowing of it: for, as perſecuting men for their Religion, muſt neceſſarily diſguſt them; ſo giving them the freedom of it, muſt needs equally oblige them. 'Tis no true meaſure to take of any parties in Religion, to ſay the one are better Subjects than the other, when the one are favoured and countenanced, and the other ſtill kept under and oppreſſed; There is no reaſon, but to believe, there is an equal Tendency in all, to love that Prince or State, where they find favour and protection; 'tis a common diſpoſition runs in the blood of all men; And by how much the Principles of any party are leſs taking and plauſible, the leſs dangerous ſtill is that party; and as they will need favour more than others, ſo they muſt needs lye proportionably ſecured to a State, by the Obligation is put upon them.

Take it for Truth which is commonly affirmed, That all ſuch for whom Liberty is at any time deſir'd, are men full of Faction and full of Error: For the firſt 'tis certain, Perſecution will not only continue, but foment ſuch Faction, and give it a plauſible pretence to juſtifie it ſelf upon, whereas a Liberty granted in matters of Conſcience, will either wholly win ſuch men to a due and hearty Obedience, as finding themſelves in a poſture they cannot expect to mend, or elſe will lay them open to ſuch apparent juſtice for puniſhment, and bring them under ſuch a general contempt, as ſhall leave them ſtrip'd of all pretenſions, and render them wholly inconſiderable. 'Tis marvellous prudence to ſeparate between *Conſcience* and *Faction*, which can never be, but

but by a liberty for the one, that ſo they may diſtinctly puniſh the other: He that hath liberty granted to worſhip God according to his Conſcience, and yet is not ſatisfied, but continues troubleſome, makes every body ready to be his Executioner, and makes that diſcovery which could never have been made before; that Faction was his end, and Conſcience but the pretended means; ſuch men will not only lie open to the States juſt ſeverity, but to the hatred of all men who do generally diſlike ill actions moſt, when they come from men of the beſt pretentions.

Puniſh men for their Religion, becauſe you judge them Factious, and mix all together, and you fall into this double error; either you puniſh men for Faction, that deſerve it not, and ſo, beſides a piece of injuſtice, do what you can to make thoſe Enemies who are not, nor would not be ſo; or elſe thoſe that are ſo, you give them the pretence of Conſcience to juſtifie themſelves in what ever ſuffering comes upon them: When people differing from the publick Religion, meet to worſhip God, and are ſeized and puniſhed for ſo doing, the Magiſtrate ſaith, *He puniſheth for Faction*; they ſay, *They ſuffer for Religion*. And all people who ſee the actual puniſhment inflicted, for things relating to Conſcience and Religion, will be ſure to believe and pitty them, and be ready to condemn the State. A due Separation, as 'tis beſt to be made, ſo 'twill, only by a liberty given, be obtained; He that intends nothing but to give God the Homage of his Conſcience, will have freedom to do it; and he that under that has other ends and aims, will be juſtly puniſhed for it: But for a State to imbibe a general belief, that all who differ from the State-Religion, are factious to the Civil Power, and not to be ſuffered, and ſo to puniſh them as ſuch, and if they be not ſo, to tempt them thereby to be ſo, is to do an act of injuſtice to them, and to forfeit their own prudence towards themſelves.

For the errors you may ſuppoſe men poſſeſſed withal, as an eager Perſecution is apt to make the Profeſſors of them, think them more than ordinary Truths, and themſelves ſome great men in maintaining them; ſo it makes others ſeek after that, when driven into a Corner, which were it in the open ſtreets, no man would regard. He that preaches and writes under reſtraint, that reſtraint begets him readers and hearers, that would elſe paſs through the World with very little notice taken of him; things difficult and hard to be come by, carry ſome weight in mens expectancy: Fooliſh and abſurd Opinions are onely put to Nurſe by Perſecution, and by that made to have ſomething in the con-

cerns and fears of others, which has indeed nothing in it self. The hiding men by a keen purſuit after them, in the profeſſion of ſuch things, keeps them alive; whereas if they were openly preached, written, and diſcourſed of, the folly of them would appear ſuch, as not only others, but the men themſelves would be aſhamed and aweary of them: Beſides, puniſhing men for Religion, where there are ſeveral parties, laies a Foundation of endleſs troubles, and perpetual feuds; for that ill Opinion and anger, which makes one party, when prevailing to ſuppreſs and puniſh the reſt, propagates ſtill the ſame anger and diſlike in the parties puniſhed, and begets by ſuch provocation, a certain reſolution to retort the ſame again, and a readineſs to embrace all opportunities to effect it; whereas that party that once gives liberty to the reſt, buries all thoſe evils, and unites all in the common union of their own intereſt and ſecurity. 'Twill be impoſſible to find out a way for men of differing Judgments in Religion, to live together, and enjoy the common advantages which as men they may afford one to another; unleſs they exerciſe an Indulgence to each other, in that variety they ſtand in as Chriſtians. Where there are many differences, and a State denies any liberty, but ſtrictly impoſeth the State-Religion upon all, the caſe alwayes falls out to be, that the earneſt deſire of that we call *Liberty of Conſcience*, lies glowing in the Embers of mens diſcontent, and is a thing in it ſelf ſo popular, a thing of ſo great evidence of reaſon, when it may be diſcourſed upon equal terms, and ſo much the concern of every man, but the preſent Impoſer, that 'tis very apt to kindle and flame out, and upon any ſtrait or emergency of the State, either by Forreign War, or Domeſtick Diviſion, to make ſuch an Earthquake, as may endanger the whole; 'Tis moſt prudent in a State to give Liberty, where there is leaſt power to demand it, thoſe may be gained by giving it, that may prove dangerous in forcing it; to force and pen men up in ſuch things is wholly unnatural, and will, like Wind penn'd up in the Earth, or the Sea ſhut up by Banks, break out at one time or another with the greater violence. Liberty in Religion was never yet denyed in a Proteſtant State, but it had firſt or laſt a miſchievous effect; to inſtruct men in Proteſtant Principles, and then put a yoke of Uniformity upon them, has no more proportion in it, than to educate a man at *Geneva*, that is to live at *Rome*, and to breed him a *Calviniſt* whom you intend for a *Papiſt*.

Were there no other reaſon to make a Prince or a State out of love with puniſhing men for Religion, and matters of that nature, this were ſufficient, to conſider ſuch puniſhment ever falls upon the moſt honeſt

of

of his Subjects in every differing Party; men of looſe jugling Principles, and unſound Hearts, will be ſure to eſcape the Net; only the ſincere plain-hearted man, that cannot diſſemble, is caught; 'twas the deviſe againſt *Daniel* heretofore, They knew in the matters of his God 'twas eaſie to deal with him, becauſe in thoſe he would not upon any terms diſſemble.

This has Three ill Effects alwayes attending it.

First, It diſobliges the beſt ſort of men in every party, whom the State ſhould moſt cheriſh and engage; whatever is ſaid to the contrary, thoſe that are the trueſt Subjects to the Great King, will be alſo found the beſt to his Vicegerents here: 'Tis a ſtrange Heterodox kind of Policy, to make all the honeſt, ſincere men in a Nation, of every party, but that one the State adheres to, the object of the States diſpleaſure, and to make Laws that can have no other effect, but their Suffering.

Secondly, All ſtanders-by, the generality of a Nation looking on, muſt needs be diſ-ſatisfied, to ſee a plain honeſt man, upright and punctual in all his dealings amongſt men, puniſhed meerly for his Conſcience to God; and becauſe he will not comply to ſave himſelf, which nothing but his Conſcience can lead him to, and by parting with which, he may at any time purchaſe his quiet; in ſuch a caſe common Ingenuity begets pity for him, if not Proſelytes to him, and great diſlike of the courſe taken with him.

Thirdly, Though it be a ſecret, yet 'tis a very ſure and certain way of bringing National Judgements upon a People; no doubt God takes great notice of the puniſhing men meerly, becauſe they are true to him; for ſo every man is, that is true to his Conſcience, though it be erroneous. Upon no other account was it, That *Paul* juſtified himſelf before the High-Prieſt, in ſaying, *He had walked before God, in all good Conſcience to that time.* His meaning was, He had gone according to his Light, as a thing pleaſing to God, though otherwiſe, as to the matter, his Conſcience was erroneous, and his Judgment miſ-informed. And he tells us afterwards, *That he obtained Mercy from God*, becauſe what he did againſt the Church, was done Ignorantly, and in purſuance of the beſt Light he then had.

The puniſhing men meerly for following the pure dictates of Conſcience, is no doubt the true cauſe of many National miſeries; And a State ſhould be careful to avoid this, as they would preſerve their own Safety and Welfare. If we look into that which naturally occaſioneth ſeveral Opinions in Religion, 'tis that which a Prince ſhould for his own

own Intereſt highly encourage, and that is Knowledge; for no doubt, as Knowledge encreaſeth, it expatiates it ſelf into variety of Thoughts and Principles; and as it enlargeth all other Sciences, ſo Religion. Knowledge is the Glory of a Nation, and that by which all matters of Concern to it, as War, Trade, Policy, and every thing elſe is highly enlarged. 'Tis the high Honour of a Prince to Govern a Wiſe and a Knowing People, as well as a Great People; 'Tis an impotent piece of Policy, and equally deſtructive to all publick Intereſt, to ſay *Subjects muſt be kept ignorant*, as to ſay, *They muſt be kept poor*. They are Maximes only fitted for a Tyrant, and ſuch who only govern for themſelves, and calculate all Intereſts, as they concentre in their own, and by ſo doing, make themſelves their own Idols. Nothing damps all Noble Undertakings amongſt men of Conſcience, like Impoſition in Religion, it makes them hang down their Heads, it makes them heartleſs in their Callings; If they are denyed freedom in Religion, men of Conſcience will care little for any thing elſe. *Solomon* tells us, *A wounded Spirit no man can bear*. He that carries a taint of trouble in his mind about theſe things, is impotent in every thing; 'tis Liberty in Religion that breeds the noble and generous minds. Let a a man know his duty to God, and have freedom to perform it, and that man will have Wiſdom and Courage above any man. Impoſing Religion upon men has never other effect, than either to lull men aſleep into implicite ignorance, and ſo make them as ſottiſh and uſeleſs Members of a State, as they are of the Church; or elſe, where it meets with Knowledge and Integrity, ſinks men under the greateſt grief, and provokes them to the greateſt diſ-ſatisfaction. If we look amongſt our ſelves, Who be they that deſire favour in this particular? And who be they that will be gratified and engaged by it, but every where men of Religious Principles? And are not they generally the ſober and ſerious men, that bring good to a Nation? Are not they in all Callings and Trades, generally moſt induſtrious, and thriving? Are not they moſt ſaving in their Expences, and every way, either in War or Peace, moſt uſeful and ſerviceable? 'Tis debauched, looſe, expenſive people that over-live their Eſtates, and neglect their Callings, that help to pull a State down; Such men will be ſure to Conform to any thing, that ſecures them in preſent Luxury; 'tis the Sober, Serious, Religious ſort of men, that every way make a Nation proſper; to diſcontent ſuch, and to put them into one common Dungeon of imputed Faction, and actual Perſecution, will never be found any right meaſure of a true National Intereſt.

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Several things with great Evidence, ſeem to plead for Moderation and Indulgence here in *England*.

First, The Number and Quantity of thoſe concerned, as well as the Quality is ſuch, that it can be no way prudent to diſcontent them, upon that which will no way compenſate the inconvenience; there can be no good Policy to leave ſo many men mixed every where, even in the higheſt places of the Nation, under diſ-ſatisfaction, without the leaſt effect, but the reproach of imprudence in doing it, and to put a diſgraceful diſtinguiſhing Character upon them, as men unfaithful to the State, only becauſe they cannot comply with ſome Ceremonies (as the caſe is generally amongſt us) and worſhip God juſt in the publick way, a thing of no more intrinſick concern to the State, than to have all men of the ſame Opinion in a diſputed point of Philoſophy, and a thing of as equal likelihood to be attain'd. A Subject that gives the ſame teſtimony of his Fidelity to his Prince, that others do, and behaves himſelf in all Civil Concerns, as a faithful and profitable Member of the Commonwealth, and yet is looked upon as a publick enemy, and made the object of publick anger, becauſe he cannot in every Circumſtance comply with publick Religion, is without doubt very ſeverely and impolitickly dealt with. As every Subject hath an Intereſt in his Natural Prince, ſo hath the Prince in every Subject, and ſhould be like the true Mother that would by no means divide the Child. To take ſuch a courſe, is to furniſh out a party ready, for whoever firſt makes a diſturbance, nay, 'tis to tempt men to do ſo, by ſeeing a party ſo prepared.

Let *Liberty of Conſcience* be once fitly given, and the root of all mens hopes and pretenſions, that deſire publick miſchief, is pulled up, and the King will be the Greateſt, and moſt Beloved Prince that ever yet ſate upon the Throne.

Secondly, We ſhall never have a flouriſhing Trade without it.

First, Becauſe the Preſure in theſe things falls generally more upon the Trading ſort of men, than any in the Nation; we may ſee it in the great City, and in all Corporations: It makes many give over Trading, and retire; It makes others remove into *Holland*, and other *Forreign Parts*; as it did heretofore from *Norwich*, to the irrecoverable prejudice of our Clothing Trade upon the like occaſion; And it certainly prevents all *Proteſtant Strangers* to come to Live and Trade amongſt us. It puts great Advantages into the hands of the *Hollander* every way, who have not a better Friend in *Europe*, than *Uniformity* in *England*. As *Liberty of Conſcience* here, is that they fear above any

thing, so it would insensibly more weaken them, than all the Victories we have obtained over them.

Secondly, Men will never Trade freely, where they do not Live and Converse freely; where a man is afraid to be watch'd to a Conventicle, and all the time he serves God, is fain to hide himself; No man will choose to live so, if he can avoid it; every man that cannot conform to the publick Religion, lying under the lash of the Law, will prudently shun both Business and Company, will never lay out his Estate, where 'tis in any mans power to do him a mischief. A man conscious to himself, that he cannot comply with the Law, will avoid medling with any thing, and choose privacy as his best security.

Thirdly, 'Tis the King of *Englands* true Interest to become Head of all the Protestant party in the World, and he will never do that, but by first making himself a common Father to all his Protestant Subjects at home. That 'tis his Interest to Head the Protestant party abroad, is plain; because being the greatest and most powerful of all Protestant Princes and States, he will necessarily draw them into a dependance upon him, and desire of Protection from him; by which not only the Protestant Interest in it self will be much secured, by being so united and conjoyned, but the King of *England* also will receive a great Accession of power, by the Influence he will have on so great a part of Christendom, which he may make use of, not only to secure the Protestant Religion against the common Enemy of it, but to advantage himself every way, by the great respect and Interest he will have in all Protestant States.

To bring the Protestants into an union amongst themselves, will be of advantage to every Protestant State, but to none so much as *England*; First, Because *England* naturally becomes the Head of such a Union; And Secondly, Because the Designs and Practices of the Popish party, ever since the Reformation, have lain, and will lye more united against *England*, than any Protestant State, as supposing that the chief Support of all the rest; and therefore *England* can never be truely safe, nor secured in its proper Interest, but when 'tis invironed with all Protestant States adhering to it, and depending upon it. How sadly *England* has miscarried, when it has espoused any other collateral Interest, but the Protestant, has been too ovious, ever since the first Reformation: *England* has been alwayes greatest at home, when it has been the greatest Defender of the Protestant Faith abroad. Now if the King will thus rightly state his Interest abroad, he must begin the Work at home; if he persecute and keep under any of his Protestant Subjects

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at home, those of their Opinion abroad, will never put themselves under his protection: As he must make no distinction in Christendom, but *Protestant* and *Papist*, so he must make no other amongst his Subjects at home. He that imposeth any one Opinion amongst the *Protestants*, and will tolerate no other, makes the distinction to be still between *Protestant* and *Protestant*, and makes himself but Head of a Party amongst them, and will never so heed the *Protestant* Interest, as to oppose the *Popish* party with it, or unite the *Protestants* so under him, as to make them acknowledge him for their Head.

Who ever would be Head of all the *Protestant* Interest, must have no common Enemy but *Popery*, and concenter all there: Imposing Conformity to the Opinion of any one *Protestant* party, upon all the rest, is but to make himself so much the weaker by every dissenter, and is indeed totally destructive to the very being of such a thing.

Lastly, Liberty of Conscience is the best way to secure us to the Protestant Faith, and to prevent a relapse to Popery; the Protestant Religion will be fastest rooted, by exerting fully the Principles of it, and a throughout adhering to them; By our practice in dealing one with an other, to deny those Principles by which we justifie our Separation from *Rome*, is the ready way to make them return thither again. *Teach men, that there is no man, nor men under any one denomination, since the Apostles times, that are infallible, in delivering Divine Truth. Teach men, that the Scripture is the only Rule of Religion, and let them read it: Tell them, they are to follow no men, further than they follow that Rule, and that every man is Judge according to the best Light he hath of that Rule, and how far other men comply with it, and differ from it: And that every man is bound to behave himself towards God, according to the Judgement he shall so make within himself*; all which are Protestant Principles, and Eternal Truths. And then collect the sense which these Principles issue themselves into; and how unreasonable will it then appear to force men to comply with the belief of others, contrary to their own; and when you have bid them use their Light and Reason to punish them, because they will not oppose it, and go against it. How can we otherwise justifie forcing men, where such Principles are avowed, but by a flat denyal of them, and recurring to those Popish Weapons of the absolute Power of the Church, and her uncontroulable Authority; and so by condemning others, that upon the exercise of their own Light and Reason now differ from us, condemn our selves, who upon the same at first departed from *Rome*. When we oppose the Church of *Rome*, we justifie our selves upon the very same Arguments,

by which dissenters now amongst our selves make their defence against us; and when we dispute against them, we take up the same Arguments the Papists use against us: There is scarce any considerable Argument urged of late for Conformity, and Imposition, but if you trace it to the Seat, you shall find it in *Bellarmine* or *Suarez*. The truth is, He that cannot indure to have any differ from him in Opinion, about the supernatural Truth of the Gospel, and will have no Toleration of several perswasions of that kind, and thinks it destructive to mankind, and the being of every State, to suffer any so to be; That man is a Protestant by mistake, and will find himself at home in his Principles no where but at *Rome*. The farther we remove in our Reformation from the Practices and Principles of the Church of *Rome*, and live upon our own, the less like we are to return to it. If we make use of their Arguments and Principles at one time, we may come to use them at another, and at last espouse them all together; and what serves our turns at some times to oppose others, may at last prevail upon our selves. And so 'tis in our practices, reserving any of their Ceremonies, may at last bring us to some of their Doctrines. He that keeps a Holiday, is within a step of praying to that Saint, for whose sake he keeps it, especially if he have the wit to consider why he keeps it. He that kneels and puts weight upon it, is in a fair way to adoration; and he that is for joyning the Cross with Baptism, may come to do it after Grace, and cross himself in time. 'Twas Bishop *Bonners* observation, when he saw the Reformation, and how many of the Popish Ceremonies were retained, being asked what he thought of it, *If they like* (saith he) *the tast of our Broth so well, they will eat of our Beef shortly.*

Secondly, Liberty of Conscience is the great means to diffuse Gospel-Knowledge in Divine things, and that's the best and surest way to bar out Popery, and lock the door upon it for ever. Ignorance is the great and only preparative for implicite Subjection. Christendom cannot (I dare say) afford an instance that ever any State or People, where Divine-Knowledge, by Liberty of Conscience, and a Liberty for the Gospel was once spread, were in the least danger of turning Apostates to Popery, but have grown daily more and more into a detestation of it, and generally almost every man amongst them, carrying a Weapon in his understanding to defend the Protestant Cause.

Were Liberty of Conscience granted in *Italy*, and other Popish States, we should soon see the Mitre totter upon the Popes head, and pro-

probably see as fair Churches there, as in any other part of Europe. 'Twas observed in the Wars of the *Low Countries*, That when ever any Catholick began to look into the Bible, he was not long liv'd in the Roman Profession.

Thirdly, Liberty of Conscience will breed men up with an irreconcileable dislike to all imposition in Religion and Conscience, and so unite them in a general abhorrence of Popery, as the Grandmother and Author of it. All Christendom over, all principles and parties born from a Liberty given in Religion, have an Antipathy in them to that Romish Yoke, and do naturally unite against the Popish Religion, as the grand and common Enemy of them all.

Let Liberty of Conscience once be given in a Protestant State, and though there be never so many differences amongst themselves, yet men of all perswasions will concenter in that. He that has the freedom of his Religion, will be concerned to defend it, and look upon Popery as the great Gyant he is in danger of. Experience and Fact, the best of all demonstrations, do evidence this: take a view of those places, where Liberty of Conscience hath been most given, and you will find there the greatest aversion to Popery, that is in any parts of Christendom.

'Tis in other places, where other Methods of Imposition and Persecution are used, that complyance with Popery hath been attempted, and projects set on foot to compound the Protestant and the Papists into an agreement.

'Tis Imposition in Religion sweeps the House, and keeps the Nest warm for Popery: Liberty of Conscience mortally stab's it; where that is once given, it may be said to the Pope, as it was to *Belshazzar*, *God hath numbred thy Kingdom, and finished it, and the place where he once tyrannized, shall know him there no more.*

Lastly, If the Church of *Rome* understand their own Interest, as we have good reason to believe they do, this Case is determined to our hands: for upon every occasion since the reformation, both in *Germany*, *France*, *Swisserland*, and all places where Liberty of Conscience hath been endeavoured, the Popes have *toto animo* every way opposed it, and declared it a thing perfectly destructive to the Church, and such, as where ever it was suffered, would destroy the Roman Faith; and in that Maxime, I believe their infallibility is not much to be denyed. Some are so much otherwise-minded, that they believe Liberty of Con-

Conſcience will be the ready means to induce Popery again amongſt us, the reaſons of it ſeem inviſible, unleſs it be to be done by ſome new Rule of contraries; it muſt either come to paſs, by giving Liberty in general to Proteſtants of differing perſwaſions, or elſe by giving liberty to the Papiſts themſelves, as included in a general Liberty.

For the firſt (I hope) it appears evidently to have another tendency.

And for the ſecond, The giving Liberty to the Papiſts themſelves amongſt us, no man well informed, can imagine that they ſhould be included in any ſuch Liberty.

Firſt, Becauſe in their practice amongſt us, they refuſe to give that publick aſſurance, every Subject ought to give of his fidelity that expects the favour due to a Subject.

And ſecondly, Becauſe their Principles are ſuch, That if they underſtand their own Religion, they can never be good Subjects to any Proteſtant State: He that knows not this, knows not the Roman Religion, and to prove it ſo by Fact.

Amongſt very many other Inſtances, let what was done here in the time of Queen *Elizabeth* to her; and at the ſame time in *France* to *Henry* the Fourth, for ever lie upon Record againſt them. Nor can a Papiſt ever become a true and hearty Subject to a Proteſtant Prince, but by that act he ceaſeth to be ſo. And as common juſtice does deny them all pretentions to Liberty, ſo common equity oppoſeth them; for as both they and their Religion abhor giving Liberty to any but themſelves, ſo is their practice accordingly, for they never give liberty to a Soul living, that differs from them, where they are able and dare deny it.

To ſay, That Liberty of Conſcience can have no other effect, but to tolerate damnable Hereſies, and all kind of Sectaries, which is the uſual way of diſcourſing it; and ſo to enlarge into all kind of Satyrical Rhetorick upon that Topick, is to put a Bears skin upon it, and then to bait it. 'Twill be to impoſe a thing of a very hard belief upon me, to ſay, That Truth never gaines by Liberty, and that the Impoſer is alwayes in the right, and the ſufferer in the wrong; eſpecially conſidering, he that thinks me an Heretick, another thinks him ſo, and a fourth thinks us all ſo; and all the while we are all of us weak, imperfect, fallible men, ſitting in judgment, and ſentencing one another: And there can be no other end of it, but that he that is ſtrongeſt, makes himſelf in the right, and deſtroys the reſt. When ever Truth comes

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to ſuffer by Impoſition, as many times it does, and comes afterwards to be ſo acknowledged, the evil of ſuch Impoſition carries its own evidence. But ſuppoſe ſuch Truth never gets any good, and Liberty ſhould be only to men under Errors and Miſtakes, 'twere not fit then to deny it, that is, 'twere not fit then to impoſe upon them; for Liberty is nothing but a Negative upon Force and Impoſition: If we conſult the good of ſuch men themſelves, ſo lapſed into Error, and deſire their Converſion, Force and Impoſition is no way to it; If we conſult our own Security, there is no danger at all can come by it; for as long as ſuch errors lye in the underſtanding, and are only converſant about ſupernatural things, they have no reference at all to the being or well-being of Mankind, as ſuch: What hurt does an Error in Religion do me in my Neighbour, that is otherwiſe an honeſt and good man? He is rather in that an object of my pity, and inſtruction, than of my anger.

If we deſire to have all men of our Opinion, becauſe we think we are in the right, 'tis a very commendable thing; and if we do it with ſuch a publick Charity, we ſhall uſe only ſuch Chriſtian means, as naturally conduce to bring it about. But, if through the pride of mens hearts, and the intention of their own exaltation thereby, they will have every body of their Opinion; and becauſe they cannot convince and perſwade them, will therefore force them, and trample upon them, that's an odious ſuperintendency.

To ſay, That upon a prudential Account, Liberty ſhould never be allow'd in State, becauſe 'tis that which will unite Parties, and bring them to a Conſiſtency amongſt themſelves, and ſo render them much more dangerous, is to ſay a thing upon a great miſtake. For common experience ſhews us, That nothing unites parties more amongſt themſelves, than a hot Perſecution; nor does any thing bring them ſo much together as that; 'tis like a great Storm, that drives Cattel, that are ſcattered about, altogether, and brings them to meet in one common ſhelter to ſave themſelves.

Ridley and *Hooper* agreed in the Goale, that would hardly have diſputed themſelves Friends.

There is no bond of union amongſt diſagreeing Perſons, like Perſecution; the common concern of their Security then begets Correſpondency, Acquaintance, and ſuch Intercourſe and mutual Aſſiſtance, as endears them above any thing one to another. And for the danger there may be of any party, there is nothing ſure ſo like to remove that, as Indulging them with a Liberty: the beſt way to be ſecured againſt

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the discontent of any party, is to remove the cause of such discontent; and the best way to be out of fear of them, unless you can totally destroy them, is to oblige them, and so at once to engage and win them over, and thereby disband our own fears.

A late Author tells us with particular remark, That *Mecenas* heretofore gave Advice to *Augustus*, *That upon no terms he should endure such, who would bring in any strange Worship into the State.* I believe it, and 'twas such kind of Advice (no doubt) that caused the ten first Persecutions.

Methinks the Author should have remembered, that that Advice would have kept Christianity out of the World: For, if we follow the track of such Policy, we shall find, that what we now say against Tolerating Dissenters amongst our selves, The Papists first said, and do still say against us all; and if we go one step higher, the Heathens said the very same against the Christian Religion it self, and thought it a Factious, Fanatick project of sick-brain'd men, and a thing not to be endured, that men should not content themselves with the same Gods that the rest of the World worshipped and acquiesced in. 'Tis a sad thing and much to be lamented, That the Protestants should take up the dregs of those Politicks, and make use of them one against another, upon every small difference amongst themselves.

The same Author, in another part of his Book, propounds this question,

If divers wayes of Worship (saith he) *be allowed in a Nation, What shall a Prince do? If he keep any men of any Profession or Party out of employment for their Opinion sake, he disobliges that party; If he bring all men indifferently alike into employment, if he be of any party himself, he will disoblige his own party, who will expect preheminence in that kind, and so in conclusion, by endeavouring to please all, he will lose all.*

This is a knot very easily untyed. I will suppose a Prince strict in the Profession and Practice of what he thinks is the Truth; and the more strict personally he is, the greater will the favour of Indulgence appear to those that differ from him: but there is no necessity, that he should make a party of those, who are of his Opinion, distinct from the rest of his Subjects; 'tis below his Greatness, and besides his Interest so to do; they will soon become like the Sons of *Zerviah*, and in time grow to be too hard for him: Those that are of his Opinion, he may think them,

them, in his private judgment, better Christians than others; but there is no Policy so to distinguish them, as if they were thereby better Subjects than others.

All men in a State, are to give one common Assurance of their Fidelity, and such who are allowed a Liberty in their Religion, when differing from the publick Profession; the Political end of it is, to make them good Subjects; and the end of that must needs be, to make them serviceable to their Prince; and there is no reason to doubt, but that they will be so, and eminently so, because they lye under an Obligation to his Favour, those of his own Opinion are not capable of. A Prince should seat himself in his Throne, with an equal Political Aspect to all his Subjects, and employ them, as their fitness for his Service qualifies them: There is no reason to narrow and limit a Prince to any party, or to let any Party grow into such a predominant Opinion, as if the Prince were confined to them.

No mans bare Opinion in such things should qualifie him for an employment, nor no mans Opinion ought to put a Negative upon him in that kind; that is for a Prince, after he has obliged all his Subjects to him, to lose the use of a great part of them. Let a Prince but choose men to serve him, whose Ability and Fitness carries the evidence of his choice, and other Exceptions will soon vanish. 'Tis below the greatness of a Prince, to have any Subject pretend to employment, upon any score, but his judgment of his fitness for it.

The King of *France* hath often with good success employed his Protestant Subjects; Nay, has often trusted the Command of his whole Army in the hand of a Protestant, and yet feared not the disobliging of the Popish party, or being thought a man of no Religion for so doing. 'Tis a most absurd and impolitick thing, because men differ in some divine supernatural things, to put them under such Characters, as to make them unuseful one to another, in all other humane things.

Let a Prince once give Liberty of Conscience, and he obliges all Parties to him, and makes them wholly depend upon him; the tenure of their Liberty will be a tenure *in Capite*, and *Quamdiu se bene gesserint*; and for employing men, and dispensing favours to them, let all Parties with a due subjection lye under the Prerogative and Soveraignty of his pleasure.

Two things are with much earnestness usually Objected against the grant of Liberty;

First, *That it is unbecoming the Zeal and Concern a Magistrate should have for the Truth of Religion, to give Liberty to any thing, but what he thinks to be so, and that such a lukewarmness, as Liberty to several Opinions supposeth, does no way become him.*

And Secondly, *That giving Liberty to men of several Opinions, is the way to propogate and encrease them, and is of great danger to a State.*

For the First, It is very fit that the Magistrate should espouse, what he thinks to be the Truth, and keep himself to a strict practice of it, and use all lawful means to possess others with it; let him use all the means Christ and the Apostles used to Convince and Convert men; but let him not lay violent hands upon mens persons, because he cannot satisfie their understandings; that is Zeal without Knowledge, and Religion without a Rule, either in Reason or Divinity; That is to run into so wide an extream from *Laodicean* lukewarmness, as to become like *Paul* before his Conversion, who saith of himself, *That he was mad, persecuting the Church.*

To say a Magistrate is lukewarm in Religion, because he will not force men to his Opinion, is to say, He is lukewarm, because he will not do a thing, that Christ hath no where required of him; and do a thing, that is to no purpose to do, for that very end for which it is done.

Tolerating men has no more in it, than not forcing men, 'tis only a Negative favour, there is nothing Affirmative in it; a Magistrate will never be charged with Lukewarmness in Religion, that makes use of all Gospel-means to promote Truth, and that he may do, and yet never violate the due Liberty of any mans Conscience. If we consult the antient practice of the first Christian Magistrates, we shall find it plain, That Liberty of Conscience was given by the Christian Emperours. *Constantine* did it fully. *Eusebius* in his life tells us, that he made a Decree in these words, *Ut parem cum fidelibus, si qui errant, pacis & quietis fruitionem gaudentes accipiant.* 'Tis true, he banished *Arrius*; but let any man consult the Ecclesiastical History, and he shall find *Arrius* so factious and base a person, that there needed no part of his Opinion to be the cause of his exile. *Gratian* the Emperour made likewise

wise a Decree for Liberty in Religion. The *Jews* had granted by all the Emperours, the same Rights with other Christians. *Jovinian* and *Valentinian*, most noble Princes, suffered Christians of several persuasions, to enjoy their Liberty: Of this, *Grotius* in his Book *De Imp. Sum. Potes. Circ. Sac. Cap.* 8. takes particular notice, adding these words, and saith he, which is more to be noted, *The Emperour did not only permit impunity to disagreeing Sects, but often made Laws to order their Assemblies.* Liberty therefore in Religion is not either so new, or so strange a thing, or so great a Monster, as men would make it. State-Religions are not alwayes infallibly true, Truth sometimes keeps men from embracing them, it does so in many parts of Christendom; and in that case a Negative Restraint upon the Magistrates compulsion, is the only shelter of Truth. The Wisdom of Christ, who hath forbid the use of the Temporal power under the Gospel, about Religion, hath left things best. For if a Magistrate be in the right, he may promote Truth, as far as in the nature of the thing, and by Christs appointment, it can be promoted; if he be not in the right, where the Temporal power does not interpose, men are secured in the profession of Truth, and not hazard in refusing a publick error.

He that would have the Magistrate force all men to his Religion, will himself be burnt by his own Principles, when he comes into a Conntrey, where the State-Religion differs from him: To say, He is in the right, and the State that does it in the wrong, is a miserable begging the Question. If one Magistrate be to do it, all are to do it, and there can be no other rule of Truth and Error in that case, but what they think so. If a Magistrate be once admitted to punish with death, what is really and truly in it self an Heresie, he may, and must by the same rule so punish every thing he thinks so; Where shall the definition of Heresie terminate, and who shall set the Magistrate bounds in such a case? Misinformation, passion, or some sinister Interest, can only lead men into such Principles, which tend to nothing, but to make Religion disturb the Peace and quiet of all mankind; and as one saith well, *To bring Christians to a butchery one of another, and to make a meer Shambles of Christendom.*

For the second Objection, *That giving liberty to several parties, encreaseth them, and makes them dangerous to a State.*

First, 'Tis very fit, that whersoever you will suppose errors to be sprung up, all the means Christ hath appointed for that end, should be

used to suppress them, and reclaim men from them; let their mouths be stopped with sound Doctrine, and Spiritual Censures; the onely Question is about the use of the Temporal power in such things: And experience tell us, That since the World began to this day, Principles and Opinions in the mind were never extinguished by the punishing the body; That old saying verifies it,

Sanguis Martyrum, semen Ecclesiæ.

Nay, there is nothing under the Sun to promote an Opinion in Religion, like making men suffer for it; the constancy and courage of men in suffering for an Opinion, will sooner perswade men to it, than all the Discourses and Sermons in the World.

If the Magistrate take a violent course to root out all different Opinions in Religion, such as the Emperors heretofore, when Heathen, took with the Christians, and the Popish States, where they are able, do at this day with the Protestants; besides the cruelty of it, with which he will besmear himself, he will miss of his end, and find a succession of those Principles in others, rising out of the Ashes of those destroys, as it used to be said heretofore by the Martyrs,

Quoties morimur, totiès nascimur.

If he take a mild and more gentle way of persecution, he only exasperates them, and then leaves them armed with all possible discontent to hurt him.

Consider the giving of Liberty under these two heads.

First, The giving of it to several Opinions and Parties, where they are already actually existing.

And secondly, The giving liberty so, as will occasion and produce such Parties and Opinions.

For the first, Where there are several Parties in Religion already in being, and diffused all over a Nation, as the Case is with us, there is no way to secure them, but to indulge them, for they are by their number outgrown the political part of persecution.

For the second, Consideration of Liberty, the giving it so, as will naturally produce several Principles & Opinions in men, he that would prevent that, must give no Liberty to the Protestant Religion, must not let the Bible be read by the Vulgar: There is no way to keep out several Opinions in Religion, but an implicit ignorant subjection to

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an impoſed infallibility, and to do as the *Turks* do, who will not have any Learning or Diſcourſe amongſt them of Religion, for that very Reaſon, becauſe they will have no Religion but *Mahomet*, nor no learning but the *Alcoran*; ſuch policy to murder mens Souls is hatched in Hell.

The very ART of PRINTING was at the firſt thought dangerous, becauſe it was looked on as a thing like to introduce ſeveral Opinions in Religion.

Cardinal Woolſey, *in a Letter of his to the Pope, hath this paſſage about it*; That his Holineſs could not be ignorant what divers effects the new Invention of PRINTING had produced; for as it had brought in and reſtored Books and Learning, ſo together it hath been the occaſion of theſe Sects and Schiſms which daily appeared in the World, but chiefly in *Germany*, where men begin now to call in queſtion the preſent Faith and Tenents of the Church, and to examine how far Religion is departed from its Primitive Inſtitution. And that which particularly was moſt to be lamented, they had exhorted Lay and Ordinary Men to read the Scriptures, and to pray in their Vulgar Tongue. That, if this were ſuffered, beſides all other dangers, the common people at laſt might come to believe that there was not ſo much uſe of the Clergy; for if men were perſwaded once they could make their own way to God, and that Prayers in their Native and Ordinary Language might pierce Heaven, as well as Latin; How much would the Authority of the Maſs fall? How prejudicial might this prove unto all our Eccleſiaſtical Orders? Lord *Herberts* Hiſt. of *Henry* the Eighth.

Liberty of Conſcience lies as naturally neceſſary to a Proteſtant State, as Impoſition to a Popiſh State; he muſt be a good Artiſt that can find a right middle way between theſe two. 'Tis the Glory of Proteſtant States to have much of the knowledge of God amongſt them, and that variety of mens Opinions,

ons, about some less weighty, and more obscure matters of Religion, as it much tends to a discovery of the Truth of them, so it no way breaks the Bond of Protestant Union, where men generally agree in the same Rule of Religion, and in all the chief and necessary Fundamentals of Salvation. Liberty of Conscience in such States, as it is their true and genuine Interest, and without which they will but deny themselves those advantages they might otherwise arrive at; so with the forementioned *Boundaries*, can never prove hurtful or dangerous, there being alwayes a just distinction to be made between those who desire only to serve God, and such who pretend that, to become injurious to men. And thus we have seen, that not only Religion but Reason, not only Duty but Interest, do invocate Princes and States in this Particular: To whom it may fitly be said in the words of the Psalmist, *Be wise now therefore, O ye Kings, and be instructed, O ye Judges of the Earth.*

FINIS.